

GALDUTAKO OBJETUAK LOST OBJECTS

Documentary film about “Mikel Zabalza” and torture.

SUMMARY

“Lost Objects” is a documentary film project which will analyse the disappearance and death of Mikel Zabalza and the use of torture in Spanish police stations during democracy.

To do this we have the participation of Mikel Zabalza's family. Besides, direct eye witnesses of the events and people who were detained alongside Mikel Zabalza will also take part.

On the other hand, experts in the matter, will help us understand why torture has not only survived but also flourished so much in Western democracies in the XX century.

SYNOPSIS

In a house in Orbaitzeta, next to an old arms factory, there is a secret kept in a box.
This box is kept and guarded in silence.

The family of Mikel Zabalza, a bus driver detained and tortured by the Civil Guard and killed after being tortured in Intxaurreondo, seeks that the truth about what happened be verified.

Another 3000 cases of reported torture remain unsolved. What has happened in Spanish police stations during democracy?

What has allowed the systematic torture of detainees to survive after the Franco regime?

How have the victims of torture and their families endured their lives? What is torture today?
How can we put an end to it?

GENESIS OF THE FILM

Almost 30 years after the events, the official version of the ``Zabalza Case`` is still in force. Mikel Zabalza tried to run away when he was about to tell three Civil Guards the whereabouts of an ETA hiding spot.

He drowned and his body was found 20 days later in the Bidasoa river. However, Basque society holds the generalized belief that he died while being tortured in Intxaurrondo. Despite this, the events have never been tried in court, nor is there official acknowledgement towards his family.

This project is born in Aezkoa, his place of birth, where his friends and family are still trying to avoid that Mikel and what happened to him are ever forgotten.

Mikel was tortured and torture is one of the most horrible violations of human rights. Torture is a practice which is very difficult to prove by those who have suffered it. With this documentary film, its promoters aim to show its consequences and the impact it has had.

THE ZABALZA FAMILY

The Zabalza family have spent decades living at the entrance of the Irati Forest, next to the old Orbaizeta Arms Factory, in an idyllic natural area. The disappearance and death of Mikel have marked the place, its inhabitants and the later generations.

The family have dealt with this tragedy for 30 years almost in silence between the pain for their loss and the hope that one day what really happened would be known. The only thing they have been able to confirm is the complete impunity of the people involved in the disappearance and death of Mikel, making it impossible for them to turn the page on their tragedy.

Most of the family, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces meet practically every weekend in the old family home, Lorentxo Etxea. It's a large family and the tragedy has made them become closer but there are certain difficult silences which are difficult to unravel. There is still a lot of accumulated pain and it forms part of the inheritance received by the current generation who wish to know what has happened in these last 30 years.

CHARACTERS

Zabalza Family

Mikel had 8 siblings: Lourdes, Itziar, Arantxa, Iñigo, Patxi, Aitor, Begoña and Idoia.

Patxi Zabalza and his wife Esther

Patxi, is a shepherd and he was detained and tortured with his brother Aitor. The disappearance of Mikel and his priority in looking for his own brother made him keep quiet at that time. 30 years later he tells for the first time what happened to him in the police station.

Lourdes and her daughter Idurre

Lourdes never wanted to transmit the pain of Mikel's disappearance to her daughter. Idurre is now a mother and is wondering how to tell her own daughter. It has taken Lourdes a long time to be able to transmit the pain. Today however, she does it alongside other victims in public talks.

Itziar Zabalza

With her husband Josu, they've spent 30 years fighting to hold a trial to clarify the death of her brother Mikel. From her passion of archaeology of the Navarran Pyrenees and her never-ending quest for answers she'll give us the keys to understanding the failed judicial processes.

Idoia Zabalza and Martin

Idoia, with her partner Martin, has managed to overcome the trauma which came from the death of her brother by dreaming about him at night. According to the people of the village, Lorentxo Etxea is a haunted house. Idoia will tell us what the truth about this is.

Begoña Zabalza and her daughter Lohizune

Begoña was 20 when her brother disappeared. The shock caused by the events and the silence in her family stopped her from remembering much of what had happened. Her daughter Loizune, a journalist, will accompany her in her quest to recover her past.

Aitor Zabalza

Arrested in the same operation, has kept quiet about the treatment he received in the police station. He will now break his silence.

Idoia Aierbe

Mikel's partner at the time of the arrest, she has never been able to overcome the trauma caused by the tortures suffered and the death of her boyfriend. She's currently gravely ill and is interned in a residence. Is it possible that the causes of her illness were the tortures endured 30 years ago?

Jon Arretxe

Detained in the same police operation, he reported having suffered serious torture and has recently documented it in a book. He'll tell us how he came to meet the main mercenaries of the GAL, including General Galindo and what his experience in Intxaurreondo was like.

Paco Etxeberria

He is a forensic scientist of international prestige who is currently undertaking a study for the Basque Government about the impact of torture. We will witness how he collects data and testimonies and recovers Eva Forest's forgotten files.

Following Generation

Mikel Zabalza had 15 nieces:

The instinct of protection that we all share couldn't hide the evidence that in their family there were many things which were never spoken about. Some of them, in their childhood, played a strange game: "In this house there is a secret in a box, which we have to find".

Many years have passed and the children's games have given way to the assumption that they too are the depositories and the ones responsible for the memory of their uncle Mikel to remain alive.

Secondary characters

Larrun Sastre

Grandson of the never-tiring fighter against torture, Eva Forest, he keeps a small archive about torture in Euskal Herria which he will hand over to Paco Etxeberria.

Kareen Helverg Larsen

We will try to get in contact with this Danish forensic scientist who came in 1985, through the mediation of Eva Forest, to undertake a second autopsy on the body of Mikel Zabalza. To this day she continues working as a researcher in torture cases and with her we will visit the IRCT in Denmark, one of the first centres of personalized assistance to tortured people in Europe.

Rapporteurs of the United Nations, European Commissioners for the prevention of torture.

Authorised voices in the fight against torture at a world level have released numerous reports about its practice in the Spanish state and the impunity with which it is applied.

Their demands to overturn in-comunication of detainees under the Antiterrorism Law have never been heeded.

Iñaki Arrizabalaga

His father was murdered by militants of the Autonomous Commandos in the 80s. After years of hate he decided to add positively to peace and, now with Lourdes Zabalza, he has participated in meetings with victims of violence.

Iñigo Iruin

The Zabalza family lawyer, will offer us the keys to a case that has been unable to reach court despite the numerous evidence which incriminate Intxaurreondo Civil Guards in Mikel's death.

SETTINGS

Orbaitzeta

Situated in the Aézkoa Valley, in the north-east of Navarre in the Pyrenean valleys. The urban centre is divided into three neighbourhoods called: Mendikoa, the highest one; Rotxapea, the lowest, where the mill is; and the village proper, where most of the houses are. We also have to mention the neighbourhood of La Fábrica (the Factory) situated 5 km from the town and which was born around the old arms factory which is now in ruins.

This is the only neighbourhood with individual farm houses although they are not considered part of the Orbaizeta Town Council. It is still considered a neighbourhood of Orbaizeta though.

Endarlatsa

Endarlatsa was where Mikel allegedly escaped and where he appeared dead 20 days later in the Bidasoa river. On 26 November 2015 at 6 a.m., 30 years after Mikel was found, we'll go back to the place with Paco Etxeberria so that he can explain to us why the official version is impossible.

The Eva Forest Archive in Hondarribia

It is situated in the endearing house of the Forest-Sastre Family in Hondarribia.

Aranzadi

Place where Paco Etxeberria carries out his research into the impact of violence.

Iza Zentrua Residence

Where Idoia Ayerbe lives and where her family and friends visit her.

Mount Ulia (Donostia/San Sebastian)

Place where Iñaki Arrizabalaga's father appeared handcuffed and killed with a bullet to the head by the Autonomous Commandos in 1980.

Orereta

Place of birth of Ion Arretxe and where he spent his youth.

Madrid

Ion Arretxe's place of residence.

Denmark

European country where Kareen Helverg Larsen lives and where the International

Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims is.

Altza

Where Mikel lived and where he was arrested.

Various places in Europe

Countries in Europe where we will interview international experts on the practice of torture.

Different places in Euskal Herria

Work Team

Aitor Balbás Ruiz

Video-activist in Eguzki Bideoak for 13 years. He has participated in documentaries: "Donde se cuece la guerra" (2005) (Where war is boiled) , "Piztera!" (2007) (Light up), "Itoitz hustu arte" (2008) and "Los malos sueños de René Petit" (2014) (René Petit's Bad Dreams).

Aitor Merino

Actor and director. His career has been mainly in cinema, theatre and television. He has worked for directors such as Montxo Armendáriz, Pilar Miró, Carlos Saura Medrano, Manuel Matji and Icíar Bollaín, among others. As a director, his short film "El Pan Nuestro" (Our Bread) has been awarded at numerous national and international festivals and he was nominated for the Goya Awards for "Asier ETA biok " (Asier and I). His first full-length documentary (co-directed with Amaia Merino) won the Irizar Award at the 61st Donostia Zinemaldia as well as various international prizes.

Miguel Angel Llamas "Pitu"

Audiovisual production technician. He works for Ahotsa.info, a news website. Previously, he worked in Apurtu.org and Ateak Ireki, also news websites. He has participated in documentaries such as "Los Trileros Forales", "¿Donde esta el dinero de la CAN?" or "Aske Gunea, la desobediencia en estado puro".

Aritz Gorostiaga Eskubi

Cameraman and editor. He has worked in different companies and media as video editor and camera. He has been responsible for image for the Pamplona Film Festival. Furthermore, he is specialized in the technical adaptation of films in the project Accessible Cinema: Production of accessibility (audio description and colour subtitles) for film and DVD.

He has participated in the following film work: "Focus on Gulu" (2010), "Mana Kanchu-No There" (2009), "Sahara is not sold" (2007), "Pamplona, so far from yesterday to today" (2005), "Bagdad Rap" (2004 winner for Best Editing in the 8th Festival International Documentary Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam of Santiago de Cuba in March 2007).

Iñigo Ruiz Balbas

Iñigo Ganzarain Source

Director and post-production technician. He has participated in documentaries like “Los Malos Sueños de Rene Petit” (2015), “Egunero” (2010), “Piztera!” (2007), “What about Columbus” (2012) or “Nomadak Tx” (2007), in this last one as assistant director and which managed, after being shown at one hundred festivals, 15 international prizes, including a special mention by the European Associated Producers in the San Sebastian Film Festival.

He has also worked for EITB as head writer for the program Euskadi Komantxe. He has directed video clips like Bukaera by the San Sebastian group Errroma and has participated in the project to integrate people with reduced mobility Free2move, for which he carried out different awareness short films banners and advertising spots.

BUDGET

The estimated budget for this project is 60,000 Euros. With this sum we will pay for personnel, travel costs and materials needed to make the documentary.

For the filming and funding of the documentary we will look for the participation of EITB, the Government of Gipuzkoa, the Basque Government, Donostia, Orereta and Aezkoa Valley City Councils, other media and public entities of a cultural nature.

Besides, other sources of funding will be a crowd-funding and the search for economic participation by people, collectives and social and cultural agents. There will also be a series of public events to raise funds during the years 2015 and 2016.

DIFUSSION

The documentary Galdutako Objektuak will be presented from September 2016 to the mayor European and Latin American film festivals, placing special emphasis in the Zinemaldia of Donostia.

It will also be shown in commercial cinemas and will be distributed in different formats for the general public such as DVDs, online streaming, etc.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE EVENTS

26 November

Arrests in Donostia, Orereta and Orbaizeta. Among the arrested are Mikel Zabalza. Mikel Zabalza's brothers are released 10 hours later.

27 November

Mikel Zabala is said to have disappeared. The official version says that he has escaped.

28 November

The search begins. Mikel's family travels to Intxaurrondo where they are told to look in 'lost property'.

29 November

Telephone call by the Civil Guard Coordinator informing that Mikel has been tortured to death. Mikel's family go to the courthouse of Donostia. The judge orders that an investigation begin, a report is asked of the Civil Guard to inform about the events. The other arrestees are taken to Madrid. Mobilizations begin and public accusations take place.

2 December

The Civil Governor of Gipuzkoa, Jules Gregorian, shows his worry about the Zabala case and claims the Civil Guards version is unbelievable. Someone calls the Zabala house saying that Mikel is in Parricide. This is false.

3 December

PNV: "Something dark is behind the disappearance of Mikel Zabala". Statements by workmates of Transits Donostia and CCOO. The French Police denies arresting Mikel in Parricide. The judge believes Jules Gregorian, "knows more". The Civil Guard occupies Orbaizeta to avoid a popular gathering from taking place. There's pressure on the priest of Orbaizeta and the City Council.

4 December.

The Basque President Zanzibar shows his worries. The court accepts the private accusation presented by Iñigo Iruin. Note from the Civil Government ratifying the Civil Guard's version of the events. Manuel Ibiza is released without charges. Idoia Aierbe and Jon Arretxe go into prison waiting the attorney's appeal against their release. More mobilizations in Alzaola.

6 December

Idoia Aierbe is released without bail. The case's judge: "Can you swim while handcuffed?"

Agreement in the Orbaizeta Town Hall asking for the events to be clarified.

Strike in the San Sebastian Tram Company.

7 December

A reconstruction of the events is undertaken in Calendar. The Civil Guards acknowledge that they did not shoot Mikel when he fled.

Incidents in Pamplona during a demonstration.

December 8.
Harshly suppressed demonstration in Donostia.
Bishop Setien refers to the Zabalza case in his homily.

December 9.
Idoia Aierbe says she saw a person taken out on a stretcher in Intxaurreondo.
Statements by the police before the judge, their lawyer offers a press conference defending the official story and an incident with the press occurs. Three photo journalists are retained by the guards. They are beaten and threatened.

December 10.
Those arrested along with Mikel provide their legal statement. They declare that they heard or saw Mikel Zabalza tortured, and that they were also tortured.
Work continues on the search. "It's impossible that the body is in the river," says an official.
Jose Barrionuevo, Minister of Interior says that "it is convenient to clarify what happened."

December 11
HB presents itself as popular accusation, blaming the Civil Guard, the Governor and the Spanish government.
Barrionuevo: "Zabalza will appear or he will be found". Galindo is called to declare.

December 12.
The judge finds that there is no record of entries and exits in Intxaurreondo, as there is in the rest of the Civil Guard barracks, so there is no record of the entry or exit of Zabalza.
The search in the Bidasoa proves unsuccessful.
Meeting between Ardanza and the Zabalza family. By contrast, Parliament Speaker Balbino Bados (UPN) refuses to receive them.

December 13.
Statements from the archbishop and the mayor of Pamplona. Garbiñe Garate, Mikel's mother thinks that he will appear, that he still lives. Family is upset with HB.

December 14
Migueltxo Otazo Txakartegi, Iñaki Ibargarai, Asun Laboa Pasaia, detained and tortured and threatened to end up like Zabalza, offer a press conference with Idoia Aierbe and Jon Arretxe.
The president of the government of Navarra Javier Zabalza Urralburu welcomes and meets with the family.
Idoia Aierbe: "Mikel now belongs to Euskadi".

December 15.
Mikel Zabalza's body appears. The first autopsy is practised.
Demonstrations and clashes throughout the Basque Country.

December 16.
Family statement: "His appearance was prepared. He has tortured to death. "
Meeting with representatives of Orbaizeta Urralburu, Roldan and Badós.
Demonstrations and incidents in Euskal Herria.

December 17.
The autopsy says he died from asphyxiation by submersion in water.
Demonstrations and clashes continue.

December 18.

General strike in the Basque Country, police repression. Zabalza is buried in Orbaizeta.